

# **EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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### **REMARKS BY**

## **U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA U.S. – BANGLADESH RELATIONS: THE SKY’S THE LIMIT!**

### **GROUP 2009**

#### **EFES RESTAURANT**

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The title of my remarks today, “U.S. –Bangladesh Relations: The Sky’s the Limit” is not simply a clever title; it is literally true. Earlier this year, at the conclusion of her visit here, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State responsible for Bangladesh declared to me that “the sky is the limit” for this bilateral relationship.

She was right ... and I intend to do everything that I can to take this relationship “to the sky,” which I believe will be in the interests of America, Bangladesh and the region.

Let’s start at the beginning and ask ourselves the most basic question if we are to assess America’s relations with Bangladesh: Does Bangladesh matter to America?

The answer is unequivocal. As I told Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman during her visit last week, Bangladesh is of strategic interest to the United States ... it truly matters to America.

Let me quickly define America’s key interests in Bangladesh:

- Global security: Bangladesh is a moderate, tolerant, democratic Muslim-majority alternative to violent extremism and offers a model to other countries of the troubled region.
- Regional and global peace and stability: As Bangladesh improves its ties with its neighbors – Burma, Nepal, India, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan – it fosters greater stability

in the region. As the world's largest contributor to peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh is a major force for global peace.

- Global food security: The world's population has just passed the seven billion mark and, as Secretary of State Clinton told me when she visited me in Angola, its population will pass nine billion within our lifetimes. She underscored that it is in America's interests that these people all have plenty to eat. To this end, Bangladesh, the world's seventh most populous, must be able to feed itself.

- Trade and Investment: Every \$1 billion of U.S. exports to Bangladesh create about 8,000 jobs in the United States. In these hard times, these jobs are much valued.

- Values: Democracy and respect for human rights are among important values we support in Bangladesh.

- Humanitarian: No one likes to see fellow human beings suffer, which is why we partner with Bangladesh to help prepare for the nation's all too frequent natural disasters.

As you can see, our interests here are considerable.

To advance our interests here, my mission works hard to promote a Bangladesh that is peaceful, secure, prosperous, healthy and democratic. I believe such a Bangladesh is in the interests of America, the region, and, most importantly, the people of Bangladesh.

So, let's take a look at where the relationship is now.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni summed it up best, when she told Undersecretary Sherman last Friday that relations are "excellent." Indeed, they are.

America is the number one single destination for Bangladeshi exports; America is the largest investor here; it is the third largest source of remittances; and education and person-to-person ties are strong and getting stronger.

Our development assistance program in Bangladesh is our largest in Asia aside from the Pakistan/Afghanistan theater. In 2011, our assistance surpassed \$180 million. I am so proud of the benefits this partnership has brought to the people of Bangladesh in so many different ways. The partnership has helped

- Provide access to primary health care for 30 million Bangladeshis;
- Reduce maternal and child mortality;
- Enable Bangladeshis to have the family size they want;

- Fight TB and HIV/AIDS;
- Prepare for natural disasters such as floods and cyclones;
- Improve food security and child nutrition;
- Strengthen the country's democratic institutions;
- Help the police shift to a new approach to policing, community policing;
- Help security forces improve maritime and land security;

And the list goes on and on.

I think I have made my point: America's partnership with Bangladesh is strong, deep and multi-faceted. Indeed, only Bangladesh is a beneficiary of all four of President Obama's global initiatives: Feed the Future, Global Health, Global Climate Change and Engagement with the Muslim world.

But I want more ... I come to Bangladesh with a mandate to broaden, deepen and strengthen the bilateral relationship, which I believe would be in the mutual interests of both America and Bangladesh.

I believe America's interests are best served by a Bangladesh that becomes an economic power commensurate with its size as the world's seventh largest country. I envision the next Asian tiger, the Bengal tiger. I believe that American trade, investment, expertise and assistance can help make that vision become a reality, though in the end only Bangladesh can make the needed choices to redress important infrastructural, power, energy, and governance constraints that obstruct Bangladesh's economic surge.

As I look to the future, I see good prospects for great growth in U.S.-Bangladesh relations, increased engagement that will help Bangladesh achieve middle income status within a decade or two. Let me share my hopes and aspirations for the relationship:

- I aspire to early conclusion of a Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement, which would establish a forum for identifying and addressing constraints to increased trade and investment.
- As concerns relating to the investment climate are addressed, I see increased American investment in energy, power generation, IT, pharmaceuticals, financial sector, among others.

- Our food security partnership, perhaps complemented by a return of Peace Corps Volunteers, would help Bangladesh become food self-sufficient, increase livelihoods of the poor, and improve child nutrition.
- I would engage with the government and civil society to assess how Bangladesh might qualify to participate in the Millennium Challenge Account.
- Increased public-private partnerships would bring additional resources to the development table.
- I want to harness the power of the vibrant Bangladeshi-American community in the United States, which continues to play an important role as an engine driving this relationship.
- I look to groups like G-9 to provide platforms like this to focus public debate and discussion on policies to find the best solutions to meet the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people.

These are just some of the possibilities for taking the relationship to the sky.

I fear, however, that I have gone on for too long, so let me conclude by returning to my opening: I sincerely believe that the sky is the limit for US-Bangladesh relations. My mission and I will work hard with the government, business and civil society of Bangladesh to realize this expanded relationship, which I believe will be in the interests of the people of both nations.

Thank you.

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*\*As prepared for delivery*

**GR/ 2012**